

Amendment

Reply to Final Office Action dated April 13, 2009

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

*This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the instant application:*

1. (Currently amended) A method of manufacturing a culture medium on which plants can be grown, characterised in that it comprises the method comprising the steps of:

a) mixing

I: a particulate base material, chosen from at least one of organic and inorganic materials, with

II: a thermoplastic biologically degradable binding agent;

b) positioning a first layer comprising a mixture of said base material and said binding agent, upon which a second layer of base material that is substantially free of binding agent is positioned, and optionally a third layer comprising a mixture of said base material and said binding agent;

c) carrying out a shaping treatment to fold the first layer over the second layer or to move the first and third layer at both sides of the second layer toward each other, such that the second layer containing only base material is completely surrounded by either the folded first layer or the first and third layers, the surrounding layer containing said mixture of base material and binding agent;

d) heating at least the binding agent in said surrounding layer using a heating agent selected from the group consisting of steam, infrared radiation, and magnetron radiation in order to at least partly fluidise it the binding agent with the base material;

e) cooling the mixture so as to substantially solidify the binding agent in said surrounding layer and whereby at least a part of to bond together the base material in said surrounding layer, becomes bonded by means of the binding agent;

wherein a first layer of base material plus binding agent is positioned, upon which a second layer of base material is positioned, and optionally a third layer of base material and binding agent is positioned;

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~~subsequently a shaping treatment is carried out such as to fold the first layer over the second layer or to move the first and third layer at both sides of the second layer toward each other, such that the second layer is completely surrounded by the first layer;~~

~~the binding agent is fluidised with the base material; and~~

~~the binding agent is substantially solidified so as to bond the base material in the layer surrounding the second layer.~~

2. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the amount of binding agent is maximally 25% by weight of the base material.

3-4. (Cancelled)

5. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the organic base material is chosen from the group consisting of peat, compost, coconut fibres, coconut granulate, hemp fibres, straw, grass, sawdust, coffee grounds, organic waste, residue from the animal feed industry and residue from the paper industry.

6. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the inorganic base material is chosen from the group consisting of clay, soil, perlite, rock wool and other inert inorganic materials.

7. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the particulate base material has a maximum size of 10 mm.

8. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein a biologically degradable elastomer is added during step a).

9-10. (Cancelled)

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11. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein step e)c) is performed by means of a forced supply of, for example, a gas or a liquid, or by means of unforced natural cooling.

12. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein a culture medium is shaped in the form of a culture plug, a culture mat, a culture block, or the like.

13. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein during the shaping treatment a compression is performed such that the shaped culture medium has up to 99% of the original volume of the mixture.

14. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, characterised in that the melting range of the thermoplastic, biologically degradable polymer is at temperatures ranging from 20 to 130 °C.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 2, wherein the amount of binding agent is maximally 15% by weight of the base material.

17. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 16, wherein the amount of binding agent is maximally 10% by weight of the base material.

18. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 17, wherein the amount of binding agent is maximally 4% by weight of the base material.

19. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 7, wherein the particulate base material has a maximum size of 5 mm.

20. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 19, wherein the particulate base material has a maximum size of 1 mm.

21. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 13, wherein during the shaping treatment a compression is performed such that the shaped culture medium has up to 80% of the original volume of the mixture.

22. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 14, characterised in that the melting range of the thermoplastic, biologically degradable polymer is at temperatures ranging from 40 to 120 °C.

23. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 22, characterised in that the melting range of the thermoplastic, biologically degradable polymer is at temperatures ranging from 60 to 100 °C.